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Integrity

why catholics leave the church



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editorial

In six articles in this issue of *Integrity* we think our writers have given an adequate introduction to the problem of why Catholics leave the Church: "Introduction" we say advisedly, because it is a subject that needs much more exhaustive treatment than it is possible to give here limited as we are for space. "Introduction"—because it is a subject that requires intensive investigation, careful and prolonged thought, and considered action on the part of laymen as well as priests. If this issue serves only as a prod to further research, increased prayer and more apostolic zeal it will have fulfilled its purpose.

The necessity of further investigation of the problem is obvious. Guesses about why Catholics fall away have been hazarded with more or less accuracy, but sometimes the explanations have been too facile. The pressure of a neo-pagan world, the cult of pleasure, the almost impossible tension between Christian and secular ideals of life are all blamed for the steady drift away from the Church. Few American Catholic sociologists have studied the extent of that drift or investigated the reasons for it. Hardly anyone would quarrel with Joseph H. Fichter, S.J. when in *Social Relations in the Urban Parish* he surmises that the fact that practice of the faith falls off most among those Catholics who are married and aged 30 to 40 can be accounted for by birth control. But what other, more remote reasons, influence people to leave the Church? What's behind the birth control? Mixed marriages have been blamed for much loss of faith, but Father Fichter seems to feel that this contention remains so far unproved, and almost no one would be naive enough to hold that only Catholics in mixed marriages use birth control. Secular education has been blamed for the loss of faith among young Catholics, but no one (as far as we know) has made any sort of study of leakage among graduates of Catholic schools.

A simple, apparently sincere Catholic woman, whom we found one day reading a devotional publication of a fringe sect, accounted for her drifting from Catholicism by saying that she never heard a sermon that dealt with her personal problems or offered her any assurance that Christ loved her personally, and "this book does." Whether her criticism is justified or not, it touches on a problem we have discussed in other issues of *Integrity*—notably the recent parish issue. In seeking to protect the faith of Catholics—a minority in a Protestant country—have we overemphasized apologetics and underplayed spirituality (which is quite another matter from novenas and private devotions)? Perhaps the statement, "It is a great misfortune to have learned the

catechism against some one," can no longer be said about Catholic education in America; but is the individual Catholic as a child and later as an adult helped to develop a strong, personal love for Christ, a sense of responsibility to Him and to the Church? "A love strong as death" isn't nourished in those who see only in the Church an organization which they hold as true but to which they merely happen to belong, and whose position they see simply as antithetical to the rest of the world. Some realization of what it means to be chosen by God for membership in the Body of His Son, and some realization of not only the obligations but above all the *joys* of being a Catholic, are needed. The Church presented as always binding, always cramping, always stifling, very understandably discourages. But "the truth shall make you free," and the Church is the perpetuation of Christ Who called Himself the Way and the Truth and the Life.

With this issue we complete nine years of *Integrity*. In those nine years we have reached a good many people—some who subscribed for a year, then were no more with us; others who have stayed with us from the beginning—our renewal rate has always been gratifyingly high. We realize that not every Catholic is a potential *Integrity* subscriber—not everybody likes to think, or to realize the impact Christian principles are meant to have on daily living. But we think a great many more people would enjoy reading *Integrity* if they only knew about it. It is rather discouraging to us when we get a letter from someone who has just discovered *Integrity*, and who asks why it wasn't called to his attention sooner. Therefore we appeal to our readers to make *Integrity* more widely known. These are the ways we suggest:

1. Give gift subscriptions. We offer a special rate of 4 for \$10, which may include your own renewal.

2. Get your parish society, Newman Club, local book store, to take an order of several copies. There is a substantial discount on bulk orders, and we especially ask priests to consider making *Integrity* available to their parishioners by stocking it in church pamphlet racks. College students can help us by taking a monthly order to sell on campus. (Further information on request.)

3. Order copies of issues that will be of special interest to your friends. The current one, for instance, is invaluable to every Catholic who has a fallen-away Catholic relative (who hasn't?) or who is interested in the apostolate to lapsed Catholics. Single copy, 25¢. 20% discount on 5 or more copies.



Dom Gregory Stevens

emotional disorders and loss of faith

Readers of Integrity will remember Father Stevens for his articles, The Spiritual Life and Emotional Disorders and Emotional Preparation for Marriage. In this article he discusses the emotional difficulties that often influence people in leaving the Church.

The faith of a Catholic and his adherence to his Church is not merely a human matter, but above all a question of divine grace. At baptism, whether it be in childhood or later in life, the Holy Spirit descends upon the soul and, with sanctifying grace, gives the supernatural virtues, of which the most important are faith, hope and charity. These are termed "theological" virtues because they, in their different ways, bring man's soul into direct contact with God Himself. In a very general sense we can say that by faith man shares in God's knowledge of Himself, by hope he participates in God's own power, and by charity he loves with God's own love. No one of these virtues is really complete without the other here on earth. St. Paul tells us that faith and hope will pass away, their place to be taken by vision and full possession. Charity, however, will remain in heaven as on earth.

In this life, the "state of grace" and the possession of charity go together; one really lives the life of grace, bestowed by God and His Spirit, when one loves with the charity of Christ. It is charity that is the Christian life, it is this sharing of God's own Love that conforms us to Christ and makes us living members of the Mystical Body.

faith, hope, charity

Even faith and hope attain their full stature only in the soul who loves God above all else. Yet, in a way, charity rests upon faith and hope, and in a special way upon faith. For faith gives us a knowledge of God whom we love by charity, and it is not possible to love someone without knowing him. In its turn the love of God strengthens the knowledge and makes of the acts of faith really and fully meritorious and virtuous actions. Faith only lives and has its full perfection when the soul also loves God with that supernatural love which we call charity.

However, we know that a soul in the state of mortal sin does not have charity at all, cannot love God in an effective way. Yet, in such a soul, there normally remain faith and hope, although they do exist in the soul in a weakened and imperfect form. They still retain their influence on the soul and its activities. The Catholic in mortal sin is still a Catholic, he can be said to have the faith and to be able to hope and trust in God's powerful assistance to achieve eternal salvation. The faith and hope of such a person is weak, because the person himself no longer is a living branch of the Vine which is Christ, yet the branch is still attached to the Vine, not by the life-giving energy of charity, but by faith and hope, which still abide.

Faith and hope can be rooted out only by what the theologians call sins directly opposed to them. Thus, the man who hopes in God and trusts that His Almighty Power is capable of bringing him to Heaven, will lose this supernatural gift only by a sin against hope, and this sin may be one of presumption or its opposite, one of despair. In a similar way, the Christian who believes in God, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, and in the Redemption effected by Christ, may lose this precious knowledge given by the Holy Ghost by a sin contrary to faith, by an act in which he rejects this knowledge and adheres to some other position, which is at variance with God's Revelation.

By the sin of infidelity, a man deliberately, pertinaciously and with full responsibility either rejects the truths God has revealed, or adopts other "truths" which he sees are contrary to Divine Truth. With such a sin comes the complete and total breakdown of Christian life, for faith is the first foundation of the life of grace, and the submission to and acceptance of God's authority, which is faith, is the cornerstone on which rests the whole edifice of the soul's supernatural life. Faith is the basic and primary contact of the soul with God in the order of grace,

and when it is gone, the contact is severed.

Faith and charity are the normal adornments and essential virtues of the Catholic. Believing as we do that Christ founded the Catholic Church, and bestowed on her alone the full riches of His grace, we also believe that the Church's sacraments, of themselves, produce grace by a divine power, in the human soul. The life of grace is the life of Catholics as such, and if some, not fully and wholly Catholics, do possess the life of grace and the gift of faith this is due to the fact that there is a real, if implicit, desire to become members of the Catholic Church, for God calls all men to such membership.

For this reason, faith and membership in the Church are naturally found together. To give up the faith would mean to give up the Church, and so too, to give up the Church would be to give up the faith. Thus, when we, as Catholics, speak of someone having left the Church, we do not refer to a merely human event, a change of mind by which one person decides to join another organized religion, or to carry on personal religious practices. For the Catholic, adherence to his Church means precisely adherence to Christ, and the one involves the other, not because of any human arrangement, but because of the disposition of God's own providence, and the express institution of Christ Himself. Leaving the Church, then, means, quite simply, leaving God and His Christ.

When we speak, then, of Catholics who have fallen away we speak of a subject of tremendous importance and great tragedy, for we are concerned with the eternal salvation of souls, with the very nature of Christ's plan for the human race. It is important to realize the full theological background of this question before we can presume to speak of various personality defects which may lead to such unfortunate consequences. Some of these disorders may be so serious and strong in one or another individual that his moral responsibility is lessened, and he is not fully guilty of sin. In most cases of this sort, our human judgment must leave all to the just and merciful decision of God.

no just reason for leaving

It is clear that for the person who is normal, and who has the ability to make reasonable decisions in the practical order, to leave the Church is an act for which no just reason can be found. This does not only mean, as was discussed in the Vatican Council, that there are no merely objectively just reasons for leaving the Church, but also it indi-

cates that there can be no subjective, personally just reasons for such a step. The Holy Father, Pope Pius XII, has recently said that: "Objective truth means also that man, in virtue of his natural faculties, enjoys the capacity of self-determination, and must consequently be considered responsible for his self-determined acts, at least until the contrary is proved or until there is a well-founded doubt." (*Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, 46, Nov. 15-18, 1954, p. 602). Theologically speaking, then, the person who by a responsible, self-determined act deliberately leaves the Church is guilty of mortal sin, and, it must be said, in keeping with the explicit statements of the Vatican Council, that one cannot lose the faith or leave the Church without neglecting and resisting grace. No responsible, normal Catholic can seriously doubt his faith, supported in his soul by divine grace, in a deliberate way or renounce this faith and membership in the Church without some grave sin having preceded such an action.

an essential distinction

It is of paramount importance, however, at this point, to make an essential distinction. We speak of leaving the Church in a rather loose fashion, whereas in reality we must keep two quite distinct situations clearly in mind. The first of them, and perhaps the one most commonly found, is that of the Catholic who fails to live up to the moral demands of his religion and thus does not live as a Catholic. It is quite possible, and probably true in the majority of cases that such a person may have been excommunicated, which is to say he may be barred from receiving the sacraments. But this does not, as such, mean that Holy Mother Church no longer considers him her child. If what was said above is remembered, it will be seen that such a person is one in whom charity and the life of grace are non-existent, but who retains his faith. This faith is kept, however, in a weak, imperfect and dangerous state, and only by God's goodness, yet faith is still really, truly present. Such a person actually believes that Christ is God, that He died for us and established His Church, but these living truths are deadened, they do not affect the person's actions, and he lives as if these truths meant nothing practically. Or, as is often the case, such a person may see very clearly the truths of his faith, may see too that he must live in accordance with them, but for one reason or another his real, actual life does not conform to that in which by God's grace, he deeply and sincerely believes. Such a person may actually be in deep and painful anguish

because of the contradiction of his life and his beliefs; he may suffer much from his weakness and wretchedness, and even pray that God, in His mercy, will bring him again to a life of grace and love, and will make possible his full participation in the sacramental life of the Church.

personality disorders

The situation just described is found perhaps most commonly among those who have become involved in bad marriages of one sort or another, or who because of alcoholism, sexual misbehavior and so on do not live as Catholics. In keeping with the words of the Holy Father, quoted above, we must consider that objectively and subjectively such a person is in mortal sin, and his position is so dangerous that it may well lead to a rejection of the primary basis of supernatural life: the gift of faith. This by no means rejects, any more than Pope Pius rejected, the real possibility of personality disorders so serious as to take away the real power and responsibility for self-determined action, or, at least, to diminish this power. Again, the individual case must be considered and appraised on its own merits. It will often be found that to a greater or lesser degree such an unhappy state has resulted, at least in part, from personality disorders. For example, alcoholism, sexual aberration, acute anxiety and strong compulsive motivation may be factors in such a person. Thus, an extremely anxious, insecure young man, already bound by a Catholic marriage, may become so attached to and infatuated by another woman that he will involve himself in a relationship that will lead to a rejection of his faith in practice and even to excommunication. For such a man, the other woman has become a psychologically necessary support and "prop," and he feels that it would be impossible to go on living without her companionship. The wise and sympathetic priest or friend will seek to discover in such cases the "lay of the land" from the psychological point of view. The purpose of this will be, not to say merely that no fault has been committed, or that such a man is a mere victim of the emotional circumstances of his personality, but to try and find, in the psychological order, something to work on which will lead to full rehabilitation. This may well provide the key to a return to the life of grace and to the Church, to say nothing of a return to internal peace and happiness.

In practically all such cases of leaving the Church because of *moral* problems and difficulties, it will be possible to find some psychological defect, such as those named, which has, at least, contributed much to the

unhappy situation. The course then open is to seek both religious and psychological help for the individual concerned. Often, the first steps taken must be along the lines of psychological help, for the person may have too strong and violent feelings about religion to be able to accept directly religious counsel.

Under the same general category of rejection of the Church, we may place the surprising number of Catholics who, perhaps still secretly retaining their Catholic beliefs, have joined other churches, or societies which are incompatible with their own religion, and this because of social and economic reasons. Such are the number of Catholics who have given up the practice and profession of their faith because these would involve a lowering of social regard from others, a lack of advancement in business or professional life. The desire for human recognition and worldly advancement must not be overlooked when we investigate the reasons for giving up religious practice as Catholics. Perhaps we are more inclined to look with some scorn or disdain upon these people who have so clearly preferred the world to the kingdom of heaven. Yet again, it is important to remember that the weak person who has made such a choice needs the strength and understanding that will enable him to see things in their proper light and act accordingly. Even if we say of such a person that he is a man who does not act from principles, and who is extremely shallow in his grasp of fundamental truths, it must be kept in mind that such a state is not only morally reprehensible but psychologically abnormal. In general, we can say that the normal man, supported by grace, will be able to put up with the losses and suffering promised by Christ to His followers without losing balance completely. Without, for the present, considering the real possibility of malicious action and intention, we should see that the lack of decision and the absence of real principle may be a pathological condition, at least in part. For example, one may be dealing in such an instance with the type of personality who receives no inner emotional support for following his moral convictions, no deep emotional repugnance in acting contrary to conscience and principles. Again the overly dependent personality, with an excess of passive, receptive characteristics may be so susceptible to the influence of others, so much in need of the support of others in his immediate social circle as to be almost incapable of acting according to his own convictions. Even in such cases, then, psychological defects may well be present as factors contributing to the general situation.

The second class or category of those leaving the Church must be

kept quite clearly distinct from the group already discussed. With those who for moral and similar reasons do not live up to their faith and have left the Church in practice, it is not at all uncommon, as has been said, to find the faith itself retained and still existing. Such persons have not fully cut themselves off from Christ and His Church, though they may be in danger of doing so, and they are certainly dead branches on the living Vine of Christ. Quite another matter is the situation of those who have really given up the faith itself. The first group retain the supernatural principles of Revelation in some way, and may even hope to return to the practice of these truths; their lives do not accord with their faith but the beginnings of the life of grace are still present in the soul. The second, however, have rejected the faith itself, or more rarely perhaps, have adhered consciously to a false doctrine, at odds with Catholic teaching. The fact of importance to notice particularly is the great distinction between these two quite different ways of leaving the Church. The one involving the retention, the other the rejection of faith itself. The one clinging in some way to God, the other fleeing from Him. In the first we may say roughly that the difficulties leading to such a situation are not themselves centered upon God, are not usually directly religious problems, but rather problems of a moral nature, which indirectly affect religious behavior. In the second, however, the difficulties are concentrated directly upon God or His Church or its doctrines, and these constitute the heart of the problems. The distinction between these two different situations must be clearly seen and kept in mind, for the second is a far more serious position than the first—if we must choose between evils.

rejection of faith

The reason for this comparative evaluation rests on two grounds. The first is theological. From this point of view, the second state is characterized by an absence and rejection of faith—of a faith once consciously and deliberately held and embraced. As faith is the first step in contact with God, and the essential condition for any supernatural activity, its absence, even more its rejection is a sign of a condition in which the soul is quite cut off from God. The gift of faith itself has been eradicated from the soul by an act of infidelity directly contrary to it. In the first state, the very presence of faith, even if weakened and dormant, does give something on which to build, and a better hope of return to the life of charity.

Psychologically, the first state is the aggravated condition in which all men find themselves in some degree. This state may be a serious one psychologically, as it certainly is theologically. But there does remain that grasp on reality and acceptance of principle implied in the retention of faith. There is knowledge to act as a guide. Furthermore, there is the fact that by faith one still clings to one's deeper self, the self which has once, more likely often, turned deliberately and full-heartedly to God. The possession of faith is a sign of the still present, if infirm, grasp on reality, and indicates a condition which, in itself, is not as serious as the abandonment of the faith. Not only supernaturally, but also naturally, the adherence to the truths of faith for the Catholic is so deep that its retention alone is a good sign, its rejection a bad one.

What are some of the psychological factors or characteristics which could enter into the production of such a state, at least as contributing causes? First of all, and probably in the majority, are those who, speaking rather technically, have a high degree of ambivalence toward those in authority. This means that a person in authority is seen, emotionally, as a figure to be at once loved and hated—the very respect engendered and demanded by the authority is sufficient to stir up great amounts of dislike and antagonism. If the person concerned has been raised by overly strict parents, or one such parent, and in a strongly religious atmosphere, the result will often be ambivalent feelings to the parents or parent seen as the dominant authority. By varied psychological processes, these feelings are transferred, as time goes on, to other figures who occupy similar positions or play analogous roles. By an emotional process of psychological mechanisms, these feelings are often shifted and directed at more remote objects than the actual parents. Given the religious background, God Himself may become the object of these emotions, and also His human representatives, who unfortunately may provoke antagonism by an overbearing behavior, are ready targets of such feelings.

The emotional disturbance in which the two forces of love, affection, and hate and antagonism are both very strong and both directed to the same object is a most painful and serious one. If these emotions are directed at God, or His Church, it is inevitable that serious religious conflicts will result, and the person will experience great difficulty in the observance of the commandments, so closely connected with the hated "authority." For such people, the question of obedience, submission and proper attitude to authority is an extremely difficult one, and may become so serious as almost to induce panic and loss of control.

In less acute stages, real and often serious and severe internal conflicts are present. The person in such states feels the need and even the compulsion (emotionally) to submit and follow the dictates of God, or His Church, but at the same time is impelled to reject and flaunt all such submission and to attack those in positions of superiority.

The person who suffers from real scruples in religious matters manifests one form of the condition just described. The state of mind of one afflicted with real scrupulosity shows the anguish of this situation. Real love for God and others is not possible in the full sense, because of the immediate presence of antagonism, often in subtly disguised forms. With some this alternation of love and detestation is so strong that violent desires to harm the other, especially the authority, are felt. For the religious person, especially perhaps the Catholic, such desires to destroy God (perhaps only symbolically), to blaspheme and curse Him are not at all unlikely.

authority in the Church

It is well to remember, at this point, the prominence of authority in the Catholic Church. First of all, our religion is based on faith, which means acceptance of truths on authority. Furthermore, the Church Christ established is organized hierarchically in a system which rests upon firm authority, and this, even if spiritual, may appear, as it does to so many, as autocratic and even totalitarian. If to this one adds the unfortunate abuses of ecclesiastical authority by some domineering clergymen, it is not difficult to see that a person who reacts pathologically to authorities will find more than enough difficulties with life in the Church.

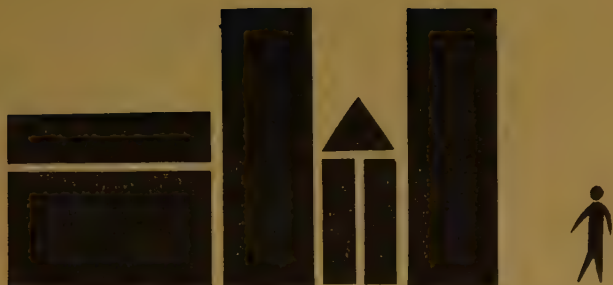
The person who does react in such a way, and does so violently, may find his very strong antagonism directed against the Church, as represented in her clergy, or even against God Himself, who is seen as an ever-present tyrant, overbearing and inexorably demanding. If together with such violent feelings of hatred, one sees too the presence of a need for submission and obedience, the sources of inner conflict are revealed. This conflict is a most agonizing and disturbing battle, and in some cases may appear, may actually be, so intolerable to the individual that he seeks for escape at all costs. It is under these circumstances that leaving the Church and rejecting God are real possibilities. It is not possible to give any exact general statement for judging the responsibility of such a step, for each case must be examined.

retreat to an inner world

The realization of these distressing psychological factors may make sympathetic and intelligent help more possible.

In addition to the personalities described just now, one may mention also the schizophrenic individual, whose disorder divides him to a greater or lesser degree, from reality. Such an individual, in so far as he is really schizophrenic, lives in a world of fantasy, and unreality—an inner world of his own making. Religious conflicts, and problems which are related to faith, may be "resolved" for such an individual by a retreat into this inner world, leaving behind the realities of faith. There are perhaps too many forms of this disorder to allow for further general description. The person concerned may be attracted to cultural, artistic pursuits, or to some exotic doctrines and he may build up a fantasy world in which the objects of these attractions will appear as sufficient foundations for his life. In such a case, the Church and faith will appear as unrelated unessentials and be rejected, often with a great deal of antagonism, for the schizophrenic possesses a vast amount of concealed aggression.

Because of the fact that psychological disturbances do contribute to the abandonment of the faith, those who are concerned with people who are living out of the Church would do well to investigate these questions. It may well be that the suggestion of psychological help would be the first step in the process of return to the Church. It must be seen that the tragic step of rejecting the faith, apart from the probably rare cases of real malice, involves not only grave moral problems but also serious psychological and personality difficulties. An attempt to deal with the latter should assist the former. The extraordinary number of defections from the faith in this country do give real cause for alarm. In view of all that has been said, we cannot doubt that the frequency of emotional disorders is related to this situation. It may be noted, incidentally, that the percentage of Catholics in mental institutions is far higher than the percentage of Catholics in the general population. Undoubtedly the breakdown of family life, the tempo and character of American life are at the basis of the difficulties experienced by individuals, and these factors make their unfortunate contribution to the state of the Church. The sincere Catholic will not fail to give these problems the consideration due them—a consideration primarily theological and religious, but one taking into full account the psychological factors involved.



Anonymous

why did i leave the church?

*A personal account of the influences that caused
a young man to leave the Church for a time.*

This question has been the most difficult I have ever had to answer. First of all, the ghosts of my past sins have sat around not unlike the hags in Macbeth, clouding my vision with a swarm of reasons. In true diabolic fashion they have mixed true and false with consummate skill until my head spins. One of their suggestions runs, "The reason you left the Church was the Church's fault! Do you remember those dull and unimaginative lessons? Mere memory work that caused you to set God side by side with Santa Claus. And how shaken you were in your faith when you discovered that Santa was a phony! You didn't know it then but your faith in God was dealt a sharp blow simply because the nuns and priests never made the God-Man a real personality to you—never taught you to speak to Him! Ha! Wrapped in swaddling-clothes! Wrapped in sugar-coated fairy tales!"

"In line with that failure," wailed another, "was the stern and loveless discipline, especially in prayer. Remember how you rattled off your prayers when the nun signalled with a CLAPCLAP of the hands? The sort of group droning that Hitler loved. Without a doubt it stifled the childish spontaneity of prayer from the heart. Remember how

Jesus said to suffer little children to come to Him? Those well-meaning people are chaining down little children so as never to permit them the joy of free flight to Him in prayer. A good thing, too, because if youngsters ever really learned to pray they might get to like it, and then where would *we* be? Suppose they should learn to understand mental prayer? Don't tell anyone that we love that droning, repetitive kind of praying!"

that last sermon

Another old hag raised a smoking hand and in the spreading mists I saw the face of the priest who said Mass the last time I was in church more than ten years ago. The priest, as he took them off, was kissing his vestments. I had come to him in the sacristy.

"And what can I do for you?" he smiled, waving out the altar boy.

"Father," I began, amazed at my own boldness, "In your sermon of Christ Crucified why did you mention the Jews so often? Every time you said the word Jews—"Jews around the Cross," or "Jews yelling for Barabbas," or "Jews crying for the blood of Our Lord," I could feel a sympathetic response from the congregation. Father, the people in this neighborhood are terribly prejudiced and I feel that a sermon like yours only strengthens prejudice. As a man of God, oughtn't you to be careful? Especially after the Jews have suffered so terribly. Isn't it actually our own sins that crucify Christ?"

He asked my name. Then, "You live around here?" he appraised me. "What schools did you go to?" I gave him a list of parochial schools, Catholic high schools and colleges.

"That explains it," he told me confidentially. "You never got to know 'them' in those schools. I went to a large city high school, and I know 'them.' Tell me, you don't really like 'them' do you?"

"Yes, I do."

His astonished face vanished as a chorus was raised by a column of my childhood friends marching through the streets at night and singing a popular ditty: "In a Spanish town upon a night like this / All the Jews are eating matzos and gefullte fish!"

"So you see," said the hag, "they never taught the first law of charity. Then how could you avoid the enjoyment of the lesser sins? It's not YOUR fault."

Oh how these hags are bashful about taking their own full credit! How they hide in the shadows of memory and point accusing fingers

not to one another, but to the Church! They succeeded in making me criticize the Church's weaknesses—its teaching methods, its priests, its worldly and unapostolic parishioners—anything so long as I kept criticism from its true object.

the real reason

Now in the sign of the cross let me drive the hags away and confess that the reasons for my leaving the Church lay in my own weaknesses and my own private sins, sins which caused me to attack the Church as Judas sought reasons when he was already bent on betraying Christ.

"Then one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, he who was about to betray him, said, 'Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?'" (John, 12, 4.)

The arousing of strong sexual drives as I came to manhood, which seemed incompatible with Church teachings; the discovery when I went into the service that the world was full of intellectual and artistic experiences which it seemed that my Italian-Catholic family and even my Catholic universities had deliberately deprived me of, and my consequent decision to cast the family and the universities off; a certain intellectual arrogance as I half began to understand this outside world too tardily encountered—all these events played a part. The essential truth, however, is that when it came to the test my faith was seemingly found wanting. It appeared to have been not a part of my growing character, but of my outgrown culture. Yet why, ten years later, was I suddenly plucked back into the Church as if by an invisible hand?

I spent my ten years out of the Church in a desperate attempt to "find myself."

"Christ would have been one of us," argued the Communists, and put my name on the *Daily Worker* mailing list, but I wasn't convinced.

"Johnnie Jones's maladjustment is certainly the product of a broken home," was the verdict of the highly-paid social worker of the board which I now joined. When I asked what I was to do with this valuable bit of insight, she slipped it into a file where a thousand children's crying needs already lay neatly analyzed at great expense. "Well, now we know what's wrong with him—but what have we actually the power to do?" And I hadn't the courage or the charity or the power to do anything but to leave her in all her knowing inadequacy.

"Art is the end of life!" I next spent years of my life in smoky rooms filled with hungry aesthetes. But the galleries and the conversa-

tions and even my own "membership card" as a struggling artist never opened any real doors for me.

"We do not hold that Jesus was divine, that would detract from the immensity of his accomplishments as a man like us." This Unitarian minister, one of the most saintly people I have ever known, still circulated ice water through me whenever he spoke.

But at last in the Bhagavad-Gita I found what I thought I wanted. It presented the goals of self-discipline, love of all creatures and complete dissolution in God. Under its influence I gave up newspapers, movies, television, the flesh of living creatures, idle talk; I endeavored to persuade my wife to become celibate. I wanted to give all to God. It was at this moment in my restless searchings that I met a Catholic friend who took an evening to bring me some books and a few well-chosen remarks. A few days later I found myself visiting a Jesuit priest "just for a talk." Then fifteen minutes after we had met I was preparing a confession of the sins of ten Christ-less years.

"No one cometh to the Son unless the Father draweth him."

I am certain that I had to lose my faith, such as it was, to know it in its tremendous reality. Now as I walk the streets or ride a train, I repeat to myself, "Christ is! He exists!" Through all of my seemingly blind peregrinations I was being led home by my invisible Shepherd. Did the Father interpret the abortive attempts at Communism as charity, social work as love for my neighbor, aesthetics as adoration, Unitarianism as seeking faith and the study of the Gita as love for God?

I am grateful to be now at the heavenly table of the Mystical Body of Christ. Join me in praying for those who argue with the half truths of the diabolical hags, and in Psalm 85:

"I will praise Thee, O Lord my God, with my whole heart, and I will declare Thy name forever, for great has been Thy mercy towards me, and Thou hast snatched my soul out of the depths of the abode of the dead."

MARRIAGE AND VIRGINITY

is the title of the October issue of *Integrity* which will contain articles on the responsible use of sex in marriage, chastity for those who are married and those who are not, consecrated virginity. 25¢ a copy; 20% discount on orders of five or more.

Write *Integrity*, 157 East 38th Street, New York 16, New York.

some reasons don't classify

*Birth control, intellectual pride, bad marriages—
these are some of the reasons people leave the Church.*

*But what of those who just drift away,
apparently without any reason?*

*Mabel Wick (it's a pen name, since she is writing
about a real person) tells of such a case.*

Why do Catholics leave the Church? I suppose you would find as many combinations of reasons as there are Catholics who leave. Not that you couldn't also lump a lot of them together under a heading of some sort and say this, or that, is the biggest reason. But all along the line, to the potential dropper-outer, things have contributed to the potential—things that can't be classified.

Just because birth control is supposed to be the biggest reason for the drop-outs doesn't mean that all those who drop out because of it have lost the faith. A lot come back later on in life, which proves they did not lose the faith. But why is it that another group, only grudgingly agreeable to the Church's stand on birth control, will stay in? Some of them admit from time to time that they wish they could practice birth control. Why don't they drop out like their neighbors?

Somewhere, sometime, things must have contributed to *being a Catholic* that made the difference for people such as these: things that warmed them a little more, held them a little closer, brought their loyalty in line even if reluctantly, things that have nothing to do with birth control, divorce, any of the "reasons" people give for leaving the Church. This in no way would eliminate the burden of distinguishing right from wrong and using the free will to resist sin, but it does suggest the possibility that all the years of growing and

living and brushing elbows with other Catholics have a lot to do with the precise state of *being Catholic* one has reached when temptation strikes. It is the temptation that can be classified—what has gone before to make the Catholic who is tempted defies classification. The making of him has been the business of his family, his Catholic friends, his Catholic teachers, his priests, the sisters, his Catholic bosses, dentist, doctor, the cop, the newsdealer—so many it would take all day to name them. All the Catholics he has ever known will have had something, however small, to do with whether he stays “in” or drops “out.”

a case in point

The following is the true story, so far, of a Catholic who fell out and then came back in. He had no good reason for leaving—but *he had no good reason for staying in*. This does not say there is none, but that *he* had none. His falling out had nothing to do with doctrine. It was concocted of a lot of human weaknesses, failures to understand and to teach, needs not met—emotional as well as spiritual. He didn't lose his faith, but it meant so little that slipping away from the sacramental life he inherited as a boy born in a “good Catholic family” didn't even bother him. His story is probably typical.

A Catholic with a bent for listening sympathetically to the woe-begone received a phone call from him one night. He had a problem and he wanted to talk to someone. Not someone Catholic, you understand—someone who would listen; that the someone was Catholic was quite accidental.

He explained his problem: he had the vague feeling he was going nuts. He had what his family and friends called a good job. He watched a big drill press punch holes in cardboards all night long. It paid good wages, had regular hours, and a lot of fellows liked it. But he got so bored and sleepy and some nights so hypnotized by the machine that he started to feel all cooped up. Some nights he couldn't make himself go to work and he'd get in his car and drive for miles. He was beginning to worry about going crazy.

Nice sound mind, giving good healthy danger signals. He was relieved to hear someone say that probably his mind was just objecting violently to a moronic occupation. What kind of work would he *like* to do?

It sounded crazy, but he wanted to drive trucks. His family

said *that* was crazy because of his eyes. He had one cross-eye, with almost no vision. He nearly lost the sight of both eyes as a child and it took surgery, treatment, trips to the biggest eye clinic in the West before they saved what they did. And the surgeon did it all for nothing because they didn't have much money. He spent a lot of time in hospitals as a child.

But his mother used to say that nature compensated for things like that and even though, or maybe because, he didn't have good eyesight, he learned to use his head. He got good marks in school. When he graduated from junior high he got the medal for the boy with the best marks and the finest citizenship. Then for some reason, he lost interest in studying. He couldn't say why. Stayed in school for a while, and then dropped out. Never did graduate from high school. He worked ever since at the kind of jobs high school boys get, grocery stores, delivery boy, outdoors on construction, seasonal jobs in the local factory. He'd never had a job he really liked, and he'd always wanted to drive trucks.

Looking back did he think maybe a girl had made the difference? Did some girl hand him a small heartbreak and hurt his feelings?

No, no girl. The fact was, maybe one of the reasons he didn't get interested in any of the jobs he had was because he didn't have a girl; someone to work for, and please. He'd always thought he'd like to get married and settle down and raise a family, but he supposed because of his eye no girl would ever take him seriously. He wasn't sure that was the reason, but he thought maybe it was.

what about religion?

He was a Catholic, wasn't he?

Well—yes.

How about Mass, and the sacraments? Did he go regularly?

Well, no. He'd have to admit that he didn't.

Why not?

He didn't exactly know. Just got out of the habit, he guessed. After he got old enough to go by himself, he used to go to the late Mass. His mother and sisters went to the early one. And then, somehow, he just wasn't going any more.

His father was dead?

Yes, his father died when he was about fourteen. His older brother was home till he got married but he didn't see much of him

any more. His older sister lived in the city where she worked. His next sister lived in town and worked, but he didn't see much of her. Another sister, one he could talk to, was married and moved away.

Couldn't he talk to the rest?

Not so well. He didn't know why. He was always "the kid," sort of in the way most of the time, he guessed. Nobody thought much about talking to him. He liked to play the piano when he was lonely, but they used to tell him to stop making so much noise so he never played unless they were out of the house. He used to play in the joint where the fellows hung out. Anyway, his family was busy. His mother worked after his father died, and all his sisters worked, and his brother. He was alone a lot so he got to hanging around with the fellows. He didn't like to drink. Didn't like the taste of it. But he was a good bowler—bowled regularly with a team. He had a lot of friends, and he guessed more people confided their secrets to him than anyone else in town. Because they knew he never repeated anything anyone told him.

Did he know anything about God?

Well, not exactly. The stuff you'd hear in sermons, but it didn't exactly stay with him long.

Did anyone ever tell him how much God loved him?

He supposed they did, sometime, but he didn't remember.

Did he know that as far as he and God were concerned, in a strange way it was as though there were only the two of them? That is how much attention God pays to him? Did he know that God had him in His mind since before the beginning of the world? Did he know that he wasn't just another child when he was born—but a special child? Did he ever think that God permitted him the suffering and anguish and near-loss of his eye because it could draw him closer to Christ? Did he ever stop to think He permits the hard things to make us come close to Him? That they have some bearing on our vocation? Did anyone ever talk to him about his vocation? Did he know what *vocation* meant?

No—he guessed not. He'd always thought it had something to do with being a priest.

It meant what God created him to do. He was created to be especially useful to God, in some way. Now trucking, for instance. Trucks were important because they carried food and produce people need in order to live. If he had always wanted to drive trucks, or be around trucks, it was quite possible this had some bearing on the

vocation God had planned for him. Did it ever occur to him that being happy and useful in a job had something to do with God's will?

No, it never did.

Well, it *did*. God is mixed up in the whole thing. Could he believe that?

Oh, sure. It sounded good. Don't get him wrong: he believed in God. He didn't *not* believe just because he didn't go to Church any more. *Somehow he just got out of the habit of going.*

how about going back?

Well, if that was the case it looked like he had better get back into the habit. He'd been worried about his mind, and God had given him that. If he really wanted to get somewhere with all this, find out what he was supposed to do, get work he liked, discover how to use his life—there was only one short cut. Prayer and the sacraments. He would have to be in the state of grace. When you are in the state of grace, God is present in your soul; then you can put your problems to Him daily, hourly, as many times as it occurs to you—and depend on His hearing. That would mean confession, and communion, and Mass every Sunday. How about that?

Well—he guessed he could. The only thing was...

What?

Once before, about a year ago, he thought to go back to the sacraments when he was low and feeling bothered about things, but he thought he ought to talk to a priest. He'd been away a long time. He went to the rectory and told the pastor but the pastor just said: "All you have to do is walk in the church. They hear there." He figured the pastor didn't care much, and he never did get to confession. He should have, and he guessed he didn't have any excuse except that his feelings were hurt.

Oh, my. Well. That was too bad. Well, how about another priest? That pastor wasn't exactly the conversational type. He didn't mean to be so brusque, but it was his way. Now another pastor, in the next town, is all ears and willing to listen forever and he would be just the type for him. He could call and make an appointment. How about that? And talk to him at *his* rectory?

Well, all right. That sounded pretty good. Maybe he would stop by some day when he was driving through. Thanks for everything. It sure did help a lot to get it all talked out. (exit)

So the young man with the problem got listed on a lot of special intentions and all those interested kept their spiritual fingers crossed.

back to the sacraments

Three weeks later the young man showed up, without the problem. He had quit the job at the factory and he now had a part-time job driving a truck. Well, no—he didn't get to confession yet. But he meant to. Real soon. He meant to make an appointment with that priest in the next parish, maybe for the next time he heard.

The Sympathetic Catholic attended Mass at the next parish the following Sunday and stopped in to mention this to Father, who said:

"Oh, yes. It's all right. He came in last night. We had a long talk and I heard his confession. Don't worry about him any more. He's a nice boy."

The next time he appeared he had multiple problems. The part-time job had folded—temporary in the first place. He was worried about keeping up with the payments on his car, and with his note at the bank (he had borrowed some money to buy his second-hand car). He wasn't living at home any more and his family was annoyed at that. He was living with friends.

The friends reported touchily that his family didn't pay any attention to him and why shouldn't he live with them if he like it there? And his family reported touchily that he ought not go off and live with another family in the same town like that. The Sympathetic Catholic wondered what effect the friends would have on his brand new rehabilitation as they were a pretty badly mixed-up bunch of bad Catholics themselves. But he liked them.

The next time he appeared not only did he have no job, but he had also been thrown over by a "nice Catholic girl" who had dated him for a few weeks but then preferred another. Boy. Faith was being tried to the utmost—most of all the faith of the Sympathetic Catholic. The crusade of prayer was having a devastating effect. One thing would soon be certain: either the reclamation was valid and would withstand this period of assault and acid test, or it was expedient and would fold under pressure.

At this point an aged relative residing with the Sympathetic Catholic stepped in. "Young man, if you would say a novena to the Infant of Prague, He would get you the money you need to make the payment on your car and get you the right kind of job."

Wow.

But there she was full of faith and handing out the ever-ready novena folder, with such conviction that all present were convinced. But the Sympathetic Catholic had some misgivings. How about "prayer is always answered but not always the way we wish?" How about "further test of faith?" How about...but these things were left unsaid, for he was gone, clutching the novena in his hot little fist.

He showed up six weeks later, in a hustle. Just thought he ought to stop by and return *this*—he fished in his wallet...

"I'm sorry it's so dirty and worn out, but it sure worked."

"You mean...?"

"Yep. I got another job. At a trucking station, handling freight. Like it the best of any job I've ever had. And it's a shift I never thought I'd like, and I like it best of any shift I've worked on. And I'm getting good pay, and I got four weeks' unemployment all at once so I got caught up with my car payments and the bank. Boy. It sure worked."

And that's his story so far. Will he stay put in the Church? One cannot tell.

what does this prove?

This story doesn't prove anything. But it does illustrate how this kind of fallen-away Catholic can fall away for a lot of reasons that cannot be classified. And for this kind of fallen-away, the way back is probably as simple. Not all are the big intellectual problems. Lots are the undernourished souls, the chilled souls, the wandered-off souls who are willing to be shown their way back into the Church, if someone will bother to care enough to show them. You never know when it is supposed to be *you*. The awful truth seems to be that for the weak ones, whatever Catholic is around at the time *is the Church*. Which doesn't seem fair, because she is so much more.

But in another way, it is all too true. She is not the building, or the archives, or the canon law, or the long line of popes, or the Summa, or the music or ritual or art. She is the Body of Christ which does not exist without its members, and we are the members. We are *it* all right. She will stand or fall, beckon or repel, according to us. It is a terrible thing to have to be so responsible, but that's the price of being a Catholic.



George H. Tavard, A.A.

conversion from catholicism?

The Converted Catholic is a magazine which purports to give the stories of those who have been converted from Catholicism.

Here Father Tavard who writes frequently for Integrity gives an interesting account of this magazine and the strange truths that can be deduced from its pages.

In November 1947 the *Converted Catholic Magazine* launched a campaign of prayer for the conversion of Msgr. Fulton J. Sheen. It was hoped that he would "discover Christ as his personal Savior." Something however miscarried in the campaign. For instead of converting him as expected, the Holy Spirit called him to become a bishop.

"Conversion," "convert," naturally have a very peculiar meaning in this context. As it should be used, "conversion" applies to the discovery of Christ by those who were hitherto unaware of His Revelation. To discover Christ fully you have to know Him, not only as a personal Savior, but furthermore as the Head of the whole Church, of mankind redeemed by Himself. Hence conversion to Christ is normally followed by initiation into the Church.

From a purely semantic point of view, the problem of "converted Catholics" boils down therefore to a misuse of words. One cannot be converted *from* something (except from our sinful life). For conversion is not a negative process. It is not a step back or a foregoing of

truths. It is rather a step forward and a completion of the partial truths that had already a place in our life.

There nevertheless is a certain similarity between those who advertise "converted Catholics" (even if they eventually turn this into a racket) and those who boast of converts from Protestantism or any other -ism. The value of conversion to the Church is not to be found in what one believed before and that has proved illusory. It resides in what has been discovered. To argue from the number of converts that have come to us from, say, Christian Science is therefore entirely misleading. For it proves nothing concerning Christian Science as such. It only shows that so many persons did not find spiritual fulfillment in Christian Science as they knew it.

These remarks on a wrong approach to the problem of conversion are relevant to an inquiry into "conversions from Catholicism." Presuming that they are sincere conversions (which we have to suppose for the sake of argument) these prove nothing whatsoever concerning the objective value of the Catholic faith. They only mean that some persons have not found their spiritual fulfillment in Catholicism as they knew it. This is not surprising. For on the one hand relatively few persons know and practice the Catholic faith as it really is. On the other, no two souls aspire to the same spiritual standards. Nothing therefore could be less realistic than becoming indignant when this or that magazine provides statistics on "ex-Catholics" or even "ex-priests." Sound judgment does not stop short at figures, whether these are true or not. It tries to assess the meaning of the alleged facts and to guide behavior accordingly.

To illustrate this short analysis of "conversion" from Catholicism (or what I would prefer to call "reversion" from Catholicism), I have delved into the rather unsavory pages of the *Converted Catholic Magazine*, supposedly published by a staff of "ex-priests." No production of the least talented of writers is as boring as the literature of bigotry, whether religious or political. Yet, interesting or not, it provides hints that may be put to good use if they are treated with discernment.

irrelevance of dogma

The first striking element in stories of reversions from Catholicism is the all but complete irrelevance of dogmatic issues to the reasons that have prompted leaving the Church. This is not to say that the doctrinal motif is absent from them. It is rather too conspicuous. The

appeal to doctrine can be traced back to a fairly common pattern. And this pattern is so entirely unconnected with the spiritual life that it must have been superadded to the real story as an afterthought, or inserted in the text, as a matter of policy, by whoever did the editing.

A certain Henry Groening tells the story of his life in a pious Catholic family, of his own zeal for the faith. All of a sudden, we reach an unprepared climax: "Eventually my doubts crystallized and the realization dawned on me that I was heading in the wrong direction. I quit. I would no longer say Mass with its idolatry, in its distorted theory of transubstantiation." That's all. There is not a word on how he came to realize that Mass was idolatry and that transubstantiation was a distorted theory. This silence is easily explained: the doctrinal aspect of the thing is not the real motive. The author, whoever he may have been, never realized that Mass was idolatry. What was basic for him is an altogether different matter: "With the full realization that the Lord Jesus Christ is my personal Savior I have reached the culmination of a spiritual peace the like of which I had never before experienced."

No wonder that such a peace he had never experienced. For peace to men of good will is indeed given in the Church, but only to those who recognize her as the organism of grace. This the Church was not to the eyes of Groening. She was "a system of cleverly assembled philosophies and theologies," "an intricate system of philosophical and theological nonsense," "no longer an exclusively religious organization . . . (but) a political one which claims to rule the world." Clearly no one could find peace in the Church, were she such a system or organization. Only gangsters would be at home there.

other "converted Catholics"

A certain Jean Marc Méthot, who claims to have been a Trappist, "found none of the spirit of love in the Church he had been brought up in." In the monastery he "experienced many injustices at the Superior's hands and, showing rebellion against this treatment, fell under his displeasure." His grievance against the Church is not more important than that. As he saw her, she became to his eyes a system of repression. It does not come as a surprise that only when he left her did he discover "the way of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ." For faith in Jesus Christ is indeed given in the Church, but only to those who accept her as the channel of salvation.

Thomas Courrett seems to be a puzzling character. He asserts that

he was greatly disturbed by "the comparison and difference between substance and accidents in the studies of transubstantiation." His doctrinal dilemma goes no further. Yet as far as this goes it is obviously phony. To find out loopholes between substance and accidents you need an acumen with which Thomas Courrett does not seem to have been favored. For when one meets such kinds of difficulties, one is intelligent enough to see that the Church's belief in the Eucharist is in no way grounded in the philosophy of essence and accidents. The heart of the matter comes to light further on: "I shall never forget the glorious day when I found Christ as my Savior. It was September 28 between one and two in the afternoon. I fell on my knees and opened my heart to the Lord. My sins were washed away: I was forgiven." The question comes to mind: why on earth had he not opened his heart to the Lord before? It would have been the end of his quest, if indeed he was seeking.

J. Esser is very frank about it. Theological problems do not bother him. His objection to the Church lies in another field: "What brought me out of the Catholic Church can be summed up in these words: too much politics, too much hypocrisy, too little religious life, and a complete absence of charity. I will not tackle any philosophical, historical or theological reasons but will just recount a few significant episodes." A case of "too much" and "too little" can be made against anything; and it proves exactly nothing. For the guilt (if guilt there is) does not fall on the Church herself but on those who are not so perfect as they would be if they lived up to the Church's standards.

In all these cases and in most similar ones the question is: so what? Everybody has met churchmen who were more political than religious-minded, authorities that were, knowingly or not, unjust. Only a few decide to leave the Church. Still fewer lose the faith as a result.

the divided soul

What makes this difference? Why do the same difficulties with persons in the Church have two opposite effects? They drive the one to a deeper loyalty to the Church as such, while they push the other out.

The hitch lies in the approach to problems. Where acceptance of the Church is one with belief in Christ, no discrepancy can ever arise between the experience of salvation and allegiance to the Church which is precisely the channel of salvation. Where that acceptance is discon-

nected from faith, the soul is divided with itself. A psychological shock will often suffice to reveal the fracture. Where there is such a duality, faith already follows, willy nilly, a Protestant pattern. Belief in the Church is no longer faith in the Mystical Body. It is only a free membership in a denomination which may be as good or as bad as any other. Leaving the Church in that case does not necessarily entail a loss of faith. It only manifests that faith was not fully Catholic even before the break occurred. As St. John write: "They went out from us, but they were not of us. For if they had been of us they would no doubt have remained with us. But they went out that it might be manifest that all are not of us."

who is responsible?

The problem of conversion from Catholicism stretches further than this. For if some members of the Church are not fully Catholic in their thinking, who is responsible for it? The answer is: everybody. Some may have a larger share of responsibility than others. But it would be hard to find one Catholic who has never set a bad example. Even though we may proclaim our faith from the housetops (if we do), people have not been induced yet to judge us on our claims rather than on our deeds. I cannot blame them. For Christianity is not a dialectic or a pyramid of theories. It is a way of life. It undoubtedly implies objective beliefs; but its subjective worth is measured by the way we pattern our practical living on those beliefs. To announce that we love our neighbor as our own self is of course very nice and comforting. It sounds very attractive. But does it correspond to reality? No long glance at our conscience is needed to reveal that, more often than not, we simply do not love our neighbor as our own self. The apologetical scope of our life is then reduced to nil. And on account of that numberless men and women despair of the Church. There are not only the score or so who leave her from time to time. There are furthermore outsiders by the thousand who are attracted by the ideal of catholicity yet fail to recognize it in the daily behavior of Catholics.

arguments for or against the Church

One can reduce to three the most sensitive domains where our practical life may provide arguments for or against the Church.

The first is our genuine charity. I once heard a supposedly dis-

tinguished member of the clergy roundly declare: "Protestants are filthy people." A Catholic layman recently brought me a letter from one of my brothers in the priesthood. I read in it that Hitler had done at least one good deed in his life: exterminate the Jews. For someone who is not perfectly balanced this sort of thing may prove the last straw, after which he will wave good-bye to all our clergy and never enter a church again. No doubt need be entertained here on shares in responsibility: these will be very impartially distributed at the Last Judgment. The weak-minded Catholic who left the Church for such a reason will probably meet with more sympathy from the Lord than the strong-minded one who shocked him out of the Church. An unlimited number of non-Catholics feel they just cannot take the final step into the Church because of this kind of behavior.

ways of worship

The second sensitive point is connected with our ways of worship. Our people are asked once in a while by their pastors to bring non-Catholics to church with them. In theory they will see the beauty of the house of God. They will notice the wisdom of the preacher. They will go back home wondering what they are doing out of the Church. But things usually turn out quite differently. For most of our services have little visible connection with the religious awe that should strike us in the presence of God. A shrewd observer of the religious scene in this country wrote in a *Life* article of "the enormous popularity of the novenas that are spreading in Roman Catholic churches, where following the rules of devotion is supposed to dispose of every imaginable kind of personal problem, all the way from getting a job to curing disease and winning back a faithless lover." Clearly, this is not the whole truth about Catholic piety. Yet if this is how things look to an intelligent outsider, small wonder that we should be accused of superstition. Following the "rules of devotion" has never brought anybody to the Church; and there is ground to think that it has never brought anybody to heaven. The craving for the unusual, which is at the origin of all booms in odd devotions is at bottom an unhealthy symptom. It is all the more ambiguous as it is so easy to satisfy. The hymn "Good-night, Sweet Jesus" exemplifies another aspect of that spread of a sentimental religion which is detached from the theological virtues and the traditional liturgy. Prayer, which is an exercise of faith, hope and charity, is a very different matter.

popular apologetics

Popular apologetics opens another field where somebody's entrance into or exit from the Church will often be decided. I find the following remark in the *Converted Catholic Magazine*: "This is a favorite trick with the Knights of Columbus pamphleteers. By spending their energy refuting ridiculous and absurd extremes, they create the impression of having won a decisive victory, when in reality they have avoided the issue."

I am not concerned with the charge against the Knights of Columbus. Nor need the Knights feel cross at it: they are obviously chosen as a target because their work is particularly efficient. The point here is that apologetics is of two kinds. The more common refutes this or that mistake, answers a particular question or clears away concrete doubts. This is needed. As long as mistakes, questions and doubts persist we will have to provide an abundant pamphlet literature aiming at all levels of intelligence and culture. Let us not assume, however, that negative apologetics is enough. Concerning it the previous remark of the *Converted Catholic Magazine* has a certain validity: when we have refuted errors we have not always won a decisive victory. For a more positive task is still left undone. We have to present the Church's doctrine in an integrated way, making it food for the intellect and a leaven in the spiritual life. Jacques Maritain had this in mind when he once said: "Dogma is the best kind of apologetics." For dogma is meaningful and relevant to the genuine needs of everyday life. Yet this meaning and relevance often remain unseen. And why is that? At the eleventh hour the Lord will find idlers in the marketplace. Their excuse will be as unanswerable as in the parable: "because no one has shown us" the meaning of all that.

Recently I was called on to advise a young Catholic woman. This was her problem: "We have two priests in our parish. One is over-intellectual. The other is a pure businessman. In between, no one of them helps us in our spiritual needs. Some of my friends go to a Protestant church where they claim that they hear more inspiring sermons. How can I blame them?" Caught by their immediate concerns, her priests have forgotten that to preach is to announce the good tidings of the Revelation and the Redemption, to "preach liberation to the captive and sight to the blind."

This brings us around to what may be the most important problem for a Catholic apostolate, in this country and elsewhere.

training for leadership

Some time ago I was speaking with a non-Catholic who had apparently been reading the *Converted Catholic Magazine*. His argument was: the Church must be in a real bad way, since men who were such devout Catholics had not known Christ before they left the Church. Of course this man was quite mistaken: either those "ex-Catholics" were not so devout as they claimed, or they suffered from the split-personality that we have diagnosed. For this the Church as such is not responsible, though some of her members certainly are, directly or indirectly. This is similar to the strange case of John Tettemer, who lost the faith in the 1920's when he was Assistant General of a well-known religious Congregation. According to his testimony he had never made a personal decision before reaching forty years of age. This is hard to swallow. Yet who can deny that it is possible? And there is nothing strange if his most personal decision ended by his leaving a way of life where no decisions were apparently needed. For no man worthy of the name can live indefinitely without taking responsibilities. The only trouble is, that John Tettemer had been the opposite of what a Catholic ought to be, following the stream instead of steering ahead.

This is the crux of the whole matter: how many of us have been trained to lead rather than to follow? We may be full of initiative in our line of business. We may strike thrilling ideas as to how best to spend our next vacation. This is all very good as far as it goes; but it does not go far. The same men who are efficient in secular matters are often entirely inarticulate where their religious life and convictions are concerned. A Catholic lady some days ago complained to me: "I am so tired of my Catholic friends. Each time a problem comes up, they say: I don't have the answer, but I don't need it for the priest has it."

Thus some, perhaps most, laymen behave according to an ethics, and believe according to a standard, which are completely exterior to them. This is very serious. For in good theology we are supposed to rely on someone else's judgment only when we are unable to reach a safe decision ourselves. This implies that we must try and form our judgment first, and then have it checked and, if need be, corrected, by a competent priest (and not every priest is competent). An amazing number of college-educated Catholics are satisfied with a yes-or-no answer when they come up to a confessional and ask: "Is this or that a mortal sin?" They are not concerned in the least with knowing the

why and wherefore of the case. Sometimes they add: "All right, Father, you must know." I am not at all gratified when I hear that. For I may expect such an attitude from a child. But an adult should have more maturity.

immature Catholics

Whatever they may have become, "converted Catholics," so-called, were immature Catholics when they still were in the Church. This may be asserted without a rash judgment. For only immaturity in the knowledge and experience of Catholicism can bring one to condemn the Church for the shortcomings of some of her members. This suggests a question. I would not venture to guess the proportion of mature Catholics that we have. But I would not think it is extremely high. For too many have had the best kind of education we can provide yet do not act as though they were religiously adult. Take the example of a young woman from Southern Europe who came to see me some time past. In her country she had attended a convent school where Mass was part of the weekly schedule. For the three years she had been in the States she had never "bothered" to inquire where the nearest Catholic Church was. Obviously the good sisters who had educated her had completely failed to give her some sort of insight into the meaning of existence. There are many like her.

Discussions are going on here and there on how to integrate the various secular disciplines and Catholic thinking in college. Everybody seems to beat about the bush. Yet the solution is indeed simple. There would be no problem of integration if every college professor were able to determine for himself the relative value of his own subject within a total Catholic culture, and to teach it in the light of that total culture. A professor who is not able to do that is not a mature Catholic and should not teach in a college or university. Neither an array of degrees nor the clerical collar nor the veil of a sisterhood is a guarantee of that sort of maturity.

No one should feign surprise when a teacher who himself is not mature in his thinking turns out graduates who know all about cosinus and sinus but have no more theology than their catechism, if that much. These in turn are badly equipped to meet the doubts and questions that must necessarily come up on the relevance of faith to modern life.

When this challenge has been met, the *Converted Catholic Magazine* and similar rackets will go bankrupt. Not before.



Niall Brennan

truth and the teacher

*The Australian author of The Making of a Moron,
tells of some of the lapsed Catholics he has met
in street-corner speaking
with the Catholic Evidence Guild.*

The heckler, bawling from the back of the audience had only one complaint to make, but he made it with the violence of simplicity.

"I used to be a ----- Catholic," he yelled, "until the priests turned my old mother out into the street and I've never been back to the Church since and I'm not going back."

This kind of question, if such it can be called, is very difficult for a CEG lecturer. The Catholic Evidence Guild, which sends laymen to teach the faith on street corners and at open air pitches in England, USA and Australia trains its speakers well enough in theology, philosophy and history but it cannot always to a man answer a berserk and irrational statement. Yet these violent objections, so simple in their irrationality, are often the most deserving of an answer. They represent a sincerity which is often absent from the more esoteric questioner who may simply like an argument. The "silly questions," the statements which betray ignorance of what the function of the Church is, of even ignorance of God, man, and the basic facts of life may still represent a barrier between a sincere man and his own salvation.

Of all these the most difficult to deal with is the man with a personal gripe against the Church. The answer to the type of "question" quoted above is clear enough in theory but very difficult to express in practice. The angry objector is in no mood for argument. He makes his point only because he sees a member of the hated organization trying to make converts. It is tragically possible that there is some truth in what he says. The history of the Church shows too clearly that members of the Church are often human in their weakness and inhuman in their lack of charity to each other. The holiness of many will never compensate, in the eyes of unbelievers, for the cruelty of the few. The angry objector is almost unconvertible himself, and can be very successful at preventing further conversions. A well-prepared speech on charity, holiness, Christ's love for men and the Mystical Body needs to be good to survive one personal experience of the contrary hurled up like a stone at the speaker. The tale of injustice is bad enough but when to this is added the proud claim that the speaker has left the Church and got along much better without it, the lecturer is facing a situation that calls not only for clear logic and vision but a good deal of genuine love to explain. The effects of the one stupid act do not stop when one soul leaves the Church. I do not know how many others have turned away, with a laugh, a sneer, or a shrug of the shoulders when their close attention to what was being told them was broken by the raucous voice of a lapsed Catholic.

In London, where the CEG operates on the most intensive scale (I once spoke for thirteen successive days at different points of the metropolis), this class of lapsed Catholic is too common. He comes with startling frequency from Ireland. He or some of his family had brawled with the officials of the Church and often the details were unpleasant. He had abandoned both Church and country in a flight to "freedom." He still believes in God and Our Lady, in all the saints and in his own holiness. His quarrel with the Church was never caused by faith or morals. He left only because of some aggression, some bad manners, or discourtesy or cruelty and he hated the Church with the vengeful fury one reserves for the worst of the big bullies.

In most parts of the English-speaking world, however, I have seen the small beginnings of the behavior pattern which eventually throws up in Hyde Park or elsewhere the tragic spectacle of a man shaking his fist at the Mystical Body. I had a very close friend who was out of the Church for ten years because he had been expelled from school for persisting with a demand for an explanation during a religious instruc-

tion class. I talked at some length with another anti-Catholic, a girl, and obviously innocent of all religious truth, and later found that my arguments were more or less pointless because she had left the Church after being publicly insulted by a nun when at school. In her exile she had tried to rationalize her belief but her knowledge of religion went no further than that of any secular school graduate. In a local parish, the constant rudeness of the priest to his flock drove hundreds to neighboring parishes, and God alone knows how many were driven out altogether. This was not the kind of rudeness imagined by sensitive people. It was a forthright, fullbellied contempt for his congregation which he made no attempt to conceal. He bullied them, ordered them around, abused them, and had such a talent for making embarrassing scenes during Mass that no non-Catholic could ever be encouraged to come to the Holy Sacrifice lest they be scandalized by what they saw or heard. At the same time this roaring old firebag was a most devout man, and a wonderful confessor. He was simply intolerant of what he took to be human stupidity. In some Catholic schools, questions are forbidden or discouraged at the religious instruction period. This is a very human reaction to some of the naively complicated questions that can be asked, and on the one occasion when I was allowed (for it is often assumed that lay teachers are unfitted, by reasons of ignorance to teach religion in Catholic schools) to take a class, I found that I needed all my Guild training to keep up with the questions asked; but the questions must be answered.

Few questions are defiant. I have never known a child ask a defiant or "trick" question, and on the whole the adults who try to knock you out with a question are fewer than those really seeking information. It would be absurd to expect them not to ask questions. "How shall I know unless some man show me. . . ."

inadequate instruction

I suppose, though I do not know for certain, that the majority of lapses are caused ultimately by marriage outside the Church. The reason why so many young men and women regard marrying a particular person as relatively more important than staying within the fold is much the same as the reason why people leave because they are hurt, embarrassed or offended. They do not know what they are leaving; and those charged with telling them what membership of the Church involves are not succeeding.

Adequate instruction would not of course prevent some seepage away from the Church. If Lucifer could choose to leave Heaven, it is unreasonable to expect that no man would choose to leave the Church. Some people would always prefer a wrong marriage to a right eternity but at least the issue should be made clearer to them; and properly equipped there might be fewer who would make such an absurd choice. True, too, that some over-sensitive people would always run from discipline, but even their numbers might be reduced. If the choice were a clear one, and if fewer of them were, so to speak, pushed out of a Church to which they can see little reason for belonging, the number of lapses might be very greatly reduced.

At present a large number do not know what the Church is, do not know what membership in her involves. They see the Church only as an organization involving social compulsions and it is very understandable that the shackle of compulsion (a thin one because it is unreal) will break at the first strain of social conflict. Too many tragically leave the Church for insufficient reason; and the insufficiency of these reasons is the worst indictment that can be levelled at the teaching methods of the Church. If a man leaves the Church for some deep reason of faith or morals the conscience of his teachers may be clear. When he leaves for some trivial reason, however serious he himself believes it to be, it can only mean that his conscience has never been tuned, his knowledge has never been improved, and the conscience of his shepherds may well be uneasy. The sheep who do not even know where the fold is obviously belong to a shepherd who is not going to weep for them when they are lost.

the number who do not leave

There is an even more sinister aspect to this problem. The number who leave the Church is alarming but it is not as alarming as the number who do not leave. I have found an alarming number of Catholics who remain in the Church either from habit, or from a lesser form of loyalty: loyalty to Ireland, their Archbishop, or merely because they have ganged up against the Masons, the Communists or the Orangemen. Nailed down on points of doctrine or morality they show a tolerance of outlook that would delight the most liberal free churchman. They go to Mass because it would be scandalous (or they will go to hell) if they do not, and because so much of their social and public life is centered in their parish community. They go to the sacraments because

it is part of the ritual of church-going, a ritual which is part of the normal life of respectable citizens whether they be Protestant, Catholic, or eccentric Biblebashers. They support lay activities from parish football to prayer crusades because it is the social custom, the mores of their group.

It is one of the miracles of the Church that such people collect their mead of grace merely by brushing past the source of it, and without knowing very much about what is happening to them. The formation of such habits is a method of keeping sheep within the fold—not the best perhaps, but nevertheless good ground planning. It does bring with it the danger of a weak laity who do not have the resistance to meet a social crisis when the Church conflicts with their other loyalties. Those who are now leaving the Church for reasons of marriage, sensitivity, or dignity are not people with unique outlooks. They represent merely the number of people who have met such a crisis and has been defeated by it. It can happen to many more. The strength of the living Church is not to be found among the number of sodality members in peacetime, but rather among the number of martyrs in times of persecution.

The problem of keeping the living Church at the highest peak of vitality goes beyond education. Education itself only becomes effective when the teacher has a deep dual love: love of his subject and of his pupil. The kind of callous indifference to both of these found in some teachers is the product of a way of life where the teacher himself caught up with trivialities and burdened with problems may ultimately forget the real nature of what he is doing in the administration of minor details. Subject to irritants, busy with many things, possibly too tired to be both a scholar and a lover, the teacher may drift easily into a routine of instruction where evasion, defense tactics and a desire to get through the day's work become the principal facets of his teaching life.

"The greatest of these is charity . . ." is an old phrase and not much understood. A teacher must love truth, wisdom and man. When he does that he will learn his subject properly, and he will delight in answering all questions, those he asks himself and those asked him by others. He will love questions, for the answers to them only enrich his own knowledge. Without this attitude, he soon destroys the pupil's faith in him as a teacher; and if he fails in the responsibility he has to God when he tells others of God, he may very well destroy his pupil's faith in God too.

John M. Todd

the leakage problem in england

*An English view of the problem of loss of faith
is given by John M. Todd
who has written widely on the liturgy, the lay apostolate
and peace, and whose book We Are Men has just
appeared in England.*

I have heard it said that the subject of leakage is of no importance because many of those who leave the Church return to it on their death beds, and so are assured of salvation. But the Church's interpretation of the gospel is that our salvation, eternal life, begins here on earth, when we receive the grace of baptism. We have to save our souls by loving God and our neighbor. The concern of the Church for our eternal salvation expresses itself in a precise concern for our lives here and now, that they be holy.

Consequently we can be sure that a situation in which 50% of those who are baptized cease to practice their faith for many years of their life presents a very grave problem which must not be ignored. In England no thoroughly scientific survey has been made—and the Newman Association is encountering severe difficulties in its attempt to make a demographic survey which will yield significant results. But all the amateur surveys, and all the figures available indicate that the lapsation is about 50%. That was the figure given by the President of the Newman Association at the World Congress of the Lay Apostolate in 1951.

the need for a center

The causes alleged are very numerous: decline of ideals in Catholic teachers, too formal teaching of religion, the decline of family life, failure to understand doctrine, commercial abuse of leisure time, industrialism, the Latin Mass, lack of a communal liturgy, lack of living parishes, lack of lay status in the Church.

Since the World Congress of the Lay Apostolate in 1951, the English Delegation of which I was a member has continued to meet twice a year and to discuss this and allied problems. During this time among other similar activities, I helped to sponsor in 1953 a Catholic People's Week on *The Lay Apostolate*. Its two general conclusions were:

1. *Modern forms of the apostolate are needed throughout society.*
2. *These new forms of the apostolate need a center.*

Now, at such a center it would be possible to undertake the sort of intensive study that this question of leakage really demands. In France it was such study that established the figure of six out of ten people as not baptized in certain rural and certain industrial areas, and thus stung Cardinal Suhard into promoting radically new solutions, in an attempt to get to the root of the trouble.

Without some center and a methodical survey, any statement on the leakage problem in England is simply a statement of personal opinion. Such is mine in this article.

analyzing the leakage

If we are logical, we must say that people who leave the Church do so because they do not understand her teaching. We cannot reasonably say that people in general are more evilly inclined than in past ages or that they are inherently more malicious. No doubt there will always be people who turn away from the Church with a radically ill will, who surrender to an objective temptation, deliberately taking the wrong and easier course. But we are discussing the ordinary run of men and women who cannot reasonably be said to be making a deliberate choice to leave the Church. They drift from her because the Church's message has come to seem to them inadequate; it does not appear to square with their experience of life or with known facts. Perhaps what they have learned of her doctrine of prayer does not satisfy their souls, hungry for something more than verbal repetition; perhaps all they know of the Church's teaching about the origin of man does not square with their knowledge of zoological facts; or what they have grasped of the doctrine of God's judgment of man does not square with what they know of the nature of the human mind and the limitations on free will.

While this analysis may be precisely true in various individual cases, it does not cover the predisposing background that made the lack of understanding possible and enabled the individual to question the

Church's authority. Nor does it cover the experience of the great majority of those who leave the Church in their teens. In England, although there is certainly a heavy slide through marriage cases, the great proportion of the leakage occurs among teen-agers. These boys and girls leave the Church, certainly, because they do not understand her teaching; but this lack of understanding is something much more devastating than the mere failure to grasp some particular doctrine. The truth, often, is that the Church herself seems completely irrelevant to their lives, especially to their work lives and their leisure lives. These two great spheres of their experience appear to have no connection whatever with the Church—except in so far as they have been told to avoid various grave sins, with the major emphasis on sexual sin. But devoid of any integrated positive teaching on love and marriage, such warnings about sexual sin hardly arouse any rational conviction for young people in the face of the obvious pleasures and apparent goodness of what they have been told to avoid.

It would indeed be possible to analyze the leakage as a function of inadequate understanding of Christian marriage. And it is undoubtedly true that the boy or girl from a good Catholic family does not usually leave the Church; irrelevant as the Church may appear for a while to his work and his leisure, she is relevant at the family level. And it is the family itself that provides the essential basis for a real understanding of the doctrine of marriage.

Can we then say that it is simply decline in family life which is at the root of the trouble? Not really. I do not believe we can say that families, any more than the boys and girls who are members of them, are radically less able to avoid evil and follow good, are radically more malicious than they have been in the past. If the family declines religiously it is for the same reason that the boy or girl leaves the Church; religion has come to seem completely irrelevant to its life, to the family relationships, the work and leisure of its members. The parish life, the parish church, the priest, the Mass, have ceased to be relevant.

It may be objected that it is unfair to pin the responsibility in this way. Secular life, industrialism, the film, television are the real trouble. But this argument is of no use to us. It is the Church's task to cope with men *as they are*, not to say the world is too much with us. Christians have indeed to change the world, always to be making the world more consonant with Christianity, but to be able to do that, they have to remain Christians. We come back to the central facts of each Catho-

lic life, the source of each individual Christian life, the place of the sacraments, the parish, the Church, the priests, the Mass.

The problems as we now have it can be specified on two levels:

1. the communal parochial life, 2. the liturgy—public worship.

parish life

The problem at the first level is all the more crucial for being still largely unrecognized. Only the trained sociologist knows about it. The parish is often no longer identical geographically with any natural community. A man's work society stretches out over the whole nation; even his local work unit probably exists or extends outside the parish, and his particular friends do likewise. So too with the family; society is so mobile that the family's relations and closest friends will probably be scattered about anywhere but in its own parish. Where a man goes to Mass, he may have not a single real friend, or only one or two whom he has made just because he goes to Mass there, friends whom he meets at church functions. The parish community has no natural roots—it involves a specific separation of religion from life, due to an historical accident, but having the inevitable result of making religion into a separate unrelated piece of piety. The priest least of all it seems is able to see this. Living in his presbytery it is clear enough to him that all the members of the parish live within a mile or so of the church; he realizes their many other contacts, but he cannot help thinking still in the primary geographical sense, and anything which militates against this he regards as an enemy trying to break up the parish. Supernatural life has always to be rooted in the natural life; the parish in many places is already broken up, disintegrated, because it lacks the essential natural basis on which alone it can be built as a valid spiritual unit.

liturgy

Let us look at the second level: the liturgy. Failure here is rooted in the facts of a foreign language and a ritual petrified in a form whose main attraction is the archaic beauty of a museum piece. I need not labor this. Even cardinals are using vivid language to indicate the present inadequacy of our liturgy. As witness I take Cardinal Lercaro's comparison of a modern Mass to a restaurant in which everyone sits at separate tables, holding his own private conversation, eating his own

private food. But God's table is meant to be a marriage feast, a banquet for all the world. The reformed Easter Vigil may be taken as the beginning of an attempt to remake the liturgy in terms appropriate to men today; the eruption of English as a liturgical language, for the renewal of baptismal vows, into the ancient Latin forms is especially significant.

There are two elements in the liturgy, action and language. Action has almost disappeared; here we have mirrored in the liturgy itself the disappearance of the social sense, the sense of community; it is difficult to act corporately in church when we are not a social body. But changes are on the way. I know a church where the Introit is sung as an entrance processional chant. I have seen the *Jeunesse Agricole Chretienne*, (Young Christian Farmers) near Lisieux, sing the Offertory chant as a processional hymn while wheat and grapes were carried up to the altar. And I look forward to the time when I shall see a similar procession singing the Communion chant. The priest's own part is action; and I look also to the time when that action will be easily seen by all the people as the priest celebrates facing the people.

Then there are the words, the action of communal verbal participation. It can be done in Latin; participation is possible even in a foreign language. But the great fact about this is that it puts the layman into an inferior position. The priest learns his ecclesiastical Latin and knows it thoroughly. Few laymen know it as well as he does. The ordinary layman cannot be expected to know it at all except in the vague way utterly unsuited to the expression of his deepest emotions and most penetrating understanding of truth, to his worship.

Men need to worship in a way which not only measures up to their potential dignity as sons of God, but to their actual dignity in the world today. Liturgy is public worship. It has to be expressed in cultural terms. Today we are still using the terms of feudal hierarchy, of an age in which a Gothic structure was appropriate and in which an illiterate people learned and lived largely by non-verbal symbols.

Today men have a strong superficial rational sensitivity. They look immediately for meaning. They are not greatly impressed by the numinous, devoid of rational sub-structure. They honor what they can understand. Their intelligence is easily attracted as it was by Nazism, as it is by Communism. Both appeal to the emotions through the intelligence; concrete intelligible ideas are the bait.

The conclusion is clear. The vernacular is essential for communal intelligent participation in the Mass.

It would be possible to jump over all our conclusions so far and to say that a Catholic must be an apostle if he is to avoid being an apostate (Pius XI's specification of the situation). And it is true that once he has a personal sense of the apostolate he will set about trying to build up a real Christian community and to make the gospel intelligible to his fellows. But it is the very lack of these two things which actually prevents many people from ever being imbued with a sense of the apostolate.

Certainly, however, it is true that even when there is a living parish community, and even when there is intelligible worship providing for a full grasp of doctrine, still men and women will easily lapse unless they have a personal sense of apostolate. And so I come to the final problem. How can a man act as an apostle for a body which treats him as a minor? How can he be an apostle without an ecclesiastical status? This problem is well illustrated by Père Congar, O.P. "Another lesson we learn from tradition is that we can have no real community, unless our ambitions, experiences, needs, criticisms, and resolutions are shared in a common gathering."

"Lay people need to be heard by the rulers in the Church, both for the provision of information and of counsel, in everything which concerns them and in which they may be able to contribute something of value: we think for instance of questions of marriage, Christian education, and so also of the actual teaching and work in schools . . . questions even of the recruitment of the clergy, a sphere in which the hierarchy who are alone responsible in the end, must obviously be the sole final judge, but in which the faithful have some interest and in which their interest is a guarantee of success, and in which we could see a modern equivalent, on the level of Church discipline, to the intervention of the populace in elections and ordinations in past ages."¹

To resume, then, the problem may be seen as one of a failure in understanding. This is situated in 1.) The anachronistic situation of the modern parish, lacking any natural society on which to build. 2.) The archaic nature of the liturgy. Given a reform of these two, an apostolic sense will be more easily aroused, and this is also essential if apostasy is to be avoided. But for a full confident apostolate, the layman needs a secure place in the ecclesiastical hierarchy; he must be at the basis of the hierarchical pyramid, not altogether outside it.

¹ *Jalons pour une Théologie du Laïc* (Editions du Cerf). A translation is being published by Blackfriars Publications in England.

book reviews

LETTERS TO A NIECE

by Baron Friedrich von Hugel, Henry Regnery, \$3.75

This is "A Thomas Moore Book-to-Live," and it lives up to the standard of the series. There is a preface by Rev. John B. Sheerin, C.S.P., a foreword by Michael de la Bedoyere, author of a recent life of Von Hugel, and an introduction by Gwendolen Greene, editor and recipient of the letters. The introduction is one of the richest parts of a valuable book and consists largely of Gwendolen Greene's recollection of Von Hugel's conversation with her. The temptation is to fill an issue of *Integrity* with quotes. Better read the book. Here is Von Hugel speaking to his niece: "Live all you can—as complete and full a life as you can find—do as much as you can for others. Read, work, enjoy—love and help as many souls—do all this. Yes—but remember: Be alone, be remote, be away from the world, be desolate. Then you will be near God!" How much more could be put in that many words?

The mark of this book is wholeness—wholeness lived and taught. Von Hugel was, with Acton and Newman, one of the three great Catholic minds of nineteenth-century England. I incline to the opinion that he was the happiest of the three. All were frustrated apostles of intelligence, opposed by what Acton called "a hostile and illiterate episcopate, an ignorant clergy, a prejudiced and divided laity," but Acton was the only irreconcilable, another tragic "pilgrim of the absolute." Newman and Von Hugel both discovered a *modus operandi* with the actualities of ecclesiasticism, and these letters of Von Hugel, written in the last years of his life—from 1918 to 1924—are an expression of a man eminently at peace, with God, with himself and with creation.

Written by a Catholic to an Anglican—who was received into the Church after her uncle's death—the letters are a course in the classics and the Fathers, a course in spirituality, a course in humanity. To me one of the most congenial elements in his doctrine is his insistence that grace builds on nature. "No grace without the substrata, the occasion, the material of nature . . ." That is why he advocated a broad base of general reading along with the specifically spiritual. Too often in our time the lay apostle has exhibited a belligerent illiteracy that is even more reprehensible than the familiar philistinism of the clergy. The Mass-priest is still a priest. He absolves us from our sins and consecrates the elements of our Daily Bread. What, without wisdom, has the lay apostle to offer?

J. E. Butler

NECTAR IN A SIEVE

by Kamala Markandaya, John Day, \$3.50

Because it is a Book-of-the-Month selection, *Nectar in a Sieve* will reach a large American audience. It deserves to be read by many, for its moving narrative of a gentle people transcending through love the crippling forces that besiege them breathes tenderness and truth and distils a message of deep human significance. The first hint of this message is Rukmani's resignation to the bleak poverty of a mud hut—a resignation which turns to grateful acceptance when she finds her husband has built it for her with his own hands. We see her learn to love the land from which she and her husband laboriously wrest their meager livelihood and where they experience the joys and sorrows of parenthood. Early in the book Rukmani senses the menace to her family and friends presented by the intrusion of an industrial concern which abruptly changes the peaceful peasant village to a town of unprecedented squalor, where traditional values are overthrown to make way for greed, cunning, and vice. Finally, deprived of the land that sustained them, she and her husband begin an odyssey in which they are stripped of everything in a series of pitiful losses which leaves them utterly destitute. Out of this nothingness they adopt a little leprosy-stricken street-urchin whose merit for them lies in the response of his need to theirs. Appearing periodically through the story is the figure of a white man, Dr. Kenny, who makes a perfect foil for the drama by his sardonic, almost rebellious, devotion to the Indian peasants and his bitter, impatient concern for their helplessness.

In this book, her first, Kamala Markandaya has proved herself a novelist of outstanding literary merit. She is more than that. In the sense in which Abbé Pierre defines the word, she is a prophet. "Today the prophetic function in society belongs to those who will become the voice of the voiceless poor." What will be the response of readers of the Book-of-the-Month—many of them Catholics—to this prophesy concerning their brothers and sisters in India?

Elaine Malley

THE VIRTUE OF LOVE

by Paul De Jaegher, S.J., Kenedy, \$3.00

In this book as in his others, Father De Jaegher's concern is to "unconcern" people with themselves. In this psychoanalytic age it is so easy to become entangled with self that even our spirituality suffers from it. Father De Jaegher points out an open avenue to Christ-centered spirituality.

The very titles of some of his meditations "Sharing Jesus' Happiness," "Jesus, Our Perfect Treasure," "The Joy of Pleasing Jesus," are an indication of the direction that this book takes. How many of us have ever thought to rejoice at the joy that is now Christ's and Our Lady's?

Such joy is not easily achieved. We do not in a day or a week come to love Our Lord so much that we can rise above the trials of this world to rejoice with Him in the next. Still, the more we can substitute Christ for ourselves as the object of our meditation, the more trust and love we experience. So if you've reached the point where you feel trapped by your own weaknesses, treat yourself to this spiritual lift. Just keep in mind that not everything in this book will apply equally to beginners. Probably religious to whom Father De Jaegher chiefly directs his book will get more out of it.

One more comment: the style and wording are French and "emotional." Men, more than women, may find this a difficulty. But if they can get beyond this, they will find nothing feminine about the message.

Mary Zeik

AMBASSADOR IN CHAINS

by Raymond A. Lane, M.M., Kenedy, \$3.50

BISHOP OF THE WINDS

by Gabriel Breynat, Kenedy, \$3.75

Ambassador in Chains is a story that will keep coming back to you long after the reading of it. It is the life of a man singled out by God from his early boyhood to save souls in the far-off missions. Patrick Joseph Byrne, who was the seventh of ten children, becomes very much alive both through his own humorous letters and from the pen of Bishop Lane who early became his close friend.

What a man of stature was Bishop Byrne of Maryknoll. His humor and his gentle dignity helped him throughout all his life in the missions and finally in the terrible death march which led to the people's prison where he died in 1950, at the age of sixty-two. One poignant instance of this is when a Communist prison guard surprised him from the rear with a brutal kick that knocked him down. He rose with a smile and said to the Korean, "You did all right," which covered the guard with confusion.

It was Patrick Joseph Byrne who said, "Maryknoll will not be strong until we have martyrs," and as he died he told his priestly companions of the death march, "Next to the grace of the priesthood, I look on it as the greatest privilege of my life to have been able to suffer

with you for Christ." You will be warmed by his great, gracious heart, and you will count him among the communion of saints and say a prayer to him often when you read of Korea and the Far East in the newspapers today.

Another life of a bishop, this one an autobiography, is Bishop Breynat's account of his eighty-six years. He lived most of his priestly life in the rugged Arctic country, a remarkable feat for him whose Congregation declared (before he was ordained) that his health was such that he was "unfit for the hardships of the Far North missions."

Gabriel Breynat was born in France in 1867, and left family and civilization for a dream he had when he was thirteen wherein a beautiful lady told him to join his brother in the seminary and that one day he would go very far away. The life he spent among Indians, Eskimos, icy winds and snow is rich adventure and real rewards. But the diet of frozen fish, fat and caribou tongue . . . ough.

It is a lively book, and gives us an insight into the folkways of the natives of the Northern wilds which is fascinating. More wonderful that this documentation, though, is the straightforward manner in which the Bishop tells his story. As he puts it: "I set my hand to the oar, whip, axe, or the handle of the frying pan far more often than I did to the pen." And the rest of it is exciting reading. *Kate Donaghy*

LIVING CHRISTIANITY

by Michael de la Bedoyere, McKay, \$3.00

One perplexing aspect of modern Catholicism has long been the disparity between the temporal and spiritual lives of many who have had all the advantages of *Catholic* education. It is comparatively easy to see why the truths of Catholicism do not penetrate and inform the lives of people who, for some reason, have been deprived of the richness of Catholic teaching. But it is not easy to see how many who have supposedly had the truth given them in its entirety should also have no apparent integration of the truth in their lives. However, this is admittedly the situation among many products of Catholic education.

In *Living Christianity*, Michael de la Bedoyère considers the problem from the vantage point of his own experiences and from astute observation of Catholic life in general. To him it seems that the heart of the problem lies in the fact that the formal practice of religion is hollow without a deep and real sense of the spiritual. It is just this *sense of the spiritual* that is so lacking in Catholic education. Mr. de la Bedoyère is writing primarily of English Catholicism, but with some alterations, his analysis is applicable to the American experience.

This book is written for laymen as well as clerics—under seventeen different chapter headings Mr. de la Bedoyère discusses such subject as Knowing God, the Wonder of Revelation, Sin, Self-Denial and God, Christ in the Church, the Mass. This book is important reading for anyone who wants a broad, practical and informative analysis of the relationship of Catholicism to life.

Grace McGinniss

THE THIRD DOOR

by Ellen Tarry, McKay, \$3.50

While Ellen Tarry's autobiography will be of particular interest to those familiar with the people and places she describes: notably the Negro literary community and Friendship Houses in New York and Chicago, it will be of hardly less importance to anyone of good will concerned with racial unity.

There are many Negroes who suffer, as does Ellen Tarry, from the color lines, visible and invisible, that are drawn nearly everywhere in the United States; there are many who writhe at seeing their children denied in practice right that are theirs in theory. But there are not so many Negroes, as there are few of any race, who are articulate, as she is, about their experiences, their frustrations, their hopes for the future.

Born in Birmingham, Alabama, she was sent to a convent school merely because its fees were low. But God turned this circumstance to good account, and she was converted to Catholicism. She became a teacher and then a journalist. Going to New York, she became associated with Catherine de Hueck in the very early days of Friendship House and was invaluable in supplying the Negro point of view to the infant organization. In World War II she worked for the National Catholic Community Service at various U.S.O. clubs. She was briefly and unhappily married and had a little daughter through whom she was to suffer some of her most poignant encounters with the color line, for the little girl was quite dark, while she herself could have passed as a white woman, and was, in fact, often urged to do this. But her steadfast refusal to "abandon" her race provides some of the most memorable reading in *The Third Door*.

This is a good, a hopeful book. The author hopes that it will serve as a documentary of a way of life that, she is confident, is disappearing—the separate way of life which the American white man has forced the American Negro to take for so long. Her hope is expressed in her title, *The Third Door*, which will not be marked "white" or "colored," but simply "American."

Patricia A. McGowan

PIERRE TOUSSAINT

by Arthur and Elizabeth Odell Sheehan, Kenedy, \$3.50

From two sensitive and perceptive people comes a warm tribute to Pierre Toussaint, a citizen of old New York, a slave and Haitian by birth, who with his master and mistress came to New York in 1787. In the years following he became a familiar figure to New Yorkers as he humbly followed his work of hair-dressing, and as a faithful slave supported his mistress—who had lost her fortune—until her death. This biography—the result of devoted research—honors the life of one who considered himself the least of the Lord's servants.

Martyrs and saints—or Pierre Toussaint's fiery compatriot Toussaint L'Overture—are eternally glorious, rightly capturing popular adulation. Yet within the Church Militant it is good that there are such as Pierre Toussaint, challenging the common man by simple and sublime charity. Of Pierre all is revealed in the testimony of a friend, "His pity for suffering partook of Our Savior's tenderness at the tomb of Lazarus."

To gaze at a former slave (for Pierre was given his freedom by his mistress on her death bed) consoler of the afflicted, bearing gifts of "faith and fortitude, money, firewood, freedom," is a gratifying experience. It is difficult to realize that his one rule of life was "that of not incurring a debt, and scrupulously paying on the spot for everything I purchased." To Pierre Mass was so precious that he attended it every day. His fraternal charity was evident in his dealings with New York's aristocracy whose homes he visited in connection with his hair-dressing. His humble Christian spirit triumphed over and confounded the prejudiced far more perhaps than would bloody insurrectionists rebelling at cruel injustices. Thus, he who at first glance might appear an "Uncle Tom" character emerges upon further study as a man who struggled unceasingly, using the weapons of love.

Brilliant and striking descriptions of early Haiti and New York mark this fictionalized biography. We see open markets and trade centers as well as the boudoirs of women of fashion. Mr. and Mrs. Sheehan excel in revivifying the exciting history of early New York. Their own great fascination with the people who converged from every port to fling aside old tyrannies and build together as best they knew invites the reader to explore both motivations and results. The Sheehans have delved into Pierre Toussaint's amazingly full correspondence in order to re-create the colorful and touching episodes of his own life and the lives of those around him. Mysterious as Pierre's character may ultimately seem to the reader, the authors have done superlative work in making him known to American Catholics.

Janet Burwash

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